

# Big Lizzie

## Part of the Chaffey Trail

*Red Cliffs had been considered by the Chaffey brothers as a possible original site for their irrigation colony, but for several reasons this did not occur at that time.*

Big Lizzie's history began in 1915 when engineer and blacksmith, Mr. Frank Bottrill, successfully tested several prototypes at the McDonald Foundry in Richmond. These trials involved the "Dreadnaught Wheel" in which additional bearers were attached to the rim of a wheel and used to spread the weight of the vehicle. This enables vehicles to successfully travel over soft soils such as sand dunes.

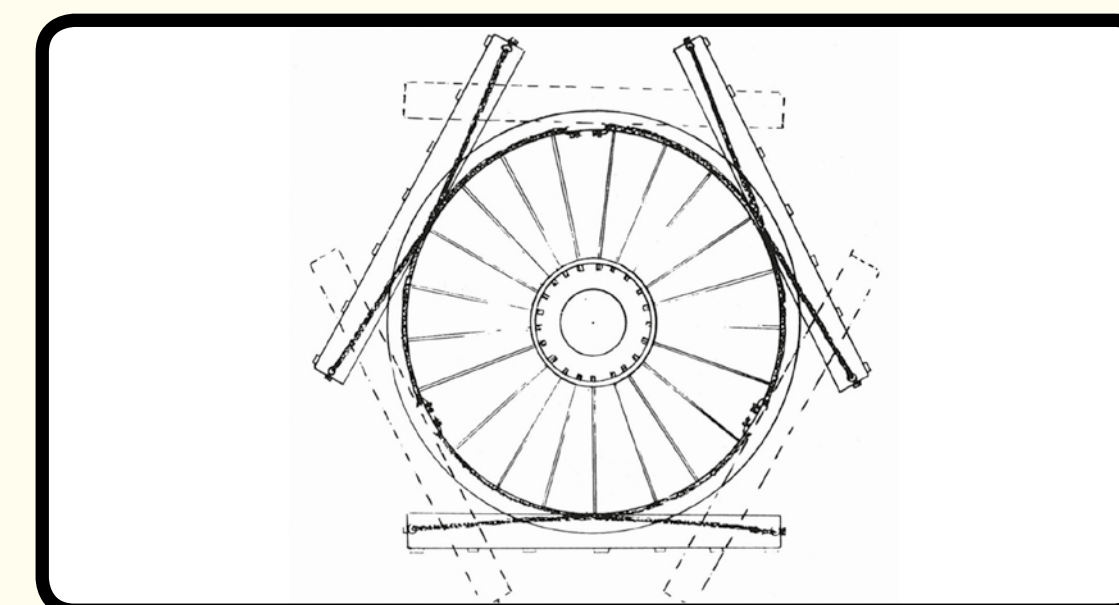
The result was a "mechanical monster" which evolved to a machine that was unique in every respect and instrumental in helping to clear the land in the settlement, now known as Red Cliffs.

With the end of World War 1 in 1918, a repatriation scheme was needed to integrate the returning diggers back into civilian life.

By August 1920 men began arriving in Red Cliffs at the rate of 50 per day. They were employed to clear trees, construct channels and establish a nursery. They had to clear the land by hand, and the arrival of Big Lizzie on the scene was heralded, as she could pull up to four and sometimes eight stumps at a time.

The First Allocation of 276 blocks was announced in December 1920. A further four allocations were made: 156 in August, 1921; 186 in May, 1922; 41 in March, 1923 and; 37 in June, 1923. Three million vine cutting were established in a large nursery to accommodate the new settlement.

The township of Red Cliffs retains an atmosphere of timeliness – a close-knit community, united by its war experience and irrigation settlement efforts.



### Did you know?

- Each wheel was 6 feet in diameter and 4 feet wide and fitted with 6 bearers each 7 feet long.
- Big Lizzie was named by Mrs. Bottrill after a giant gun in WW1 developed by the British to rival the German gun, 'Big Bertha'.
- The 200 foot turning required 80 turns of the steering wheel.
- Big Lizzie carried 17 tons of crude oil fuel and drinking water for the journey.



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## What is here today!

Big Lizzie stands proudly in Barclay Square as a testimony to the foresight and initiative of the early pioneers. In 1971 as part of Red Cliffs Golden 50 year Jubilee ceremonies, Big Lizzie was returned to Red Cliffs and was restored for all to enjoy. Today, she is a major tourist icon in the area.

Big Lizzie was originally constructed to transport wool from the station properties adjoining Broken Hill. In October 1917, after nearly 2 years travelling, Big Lizzie arrived in Mildura. Due to flooding of the Murray River with no bridges or ferries suitable to carry her, Big Lizzie was unable to complete the journey and remained in Victoria.

With Frank Bottrill operating, Big Lizzie successfully proved her worth and was found to be ideal for pulling out and clearing mallee stumps. Her special “Dreadnaught Wheels” proving unstoppable no matter what the soil condition.

Big Lizzie weighs 45 tons, and was powered by a 60 horsepower Blackstone Crude Oil Engine. Originally with two trailers giving a total length of 30 m, Big Lizzie was able haul 80 tonnes at a top speed of just 3 kilometers per hour.

Big Lizzie, the slow but steady “mechanical monster”, who’s efforts in in clearing the land for Irrigation Settlement endeared herself to the community of Red Cliffs.

# THE CHAFFEY STORY

## THE VISION UNFOLDS

Today, Mildura is a living testimony to the foresight of the Canadian brothers George and WB Chaffey.

The Chaffey Trail is a heritage experience tracing the growth of the Chaffeys’ vision to make Mildura, Victoria, the site of Australia’s first irrigation colony.

Visitors can gain a more comprehensive insight into the determination, vision and pioneering spirit of the people who helped to establish this region by visiting other Chaffey Trail sites.



## OTHER LINKS

- Visitor Information Centre
- The Mildura Station Homestead
- Mildura Homestead Cemetery
- Rio Vista Historic House
- Lock 11 & Mildura Weir
- Mildura Wharf / Port of Mildura
- Mildura Grand Hotel
- Psyche Pumps / King’s Billabong
- Chateau Mildura
- Merbein
- Langtree Hall
- Mildura Club
- Big Lizzie YOU ARE HERE

